



March 21, 2006

BUDGET VS. APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

We have had some questions regarding the recent budget amendments offered on the Senate floor and whether the passage of the Specter/Harkin amendment guarantees funding for Perkins.

To offer some clarification to this issue ...

There are two steps in the federal funding process. First, there is the budget process whereby Congress decides how much funding there is to spend. The second step is the appropriations process whereby Congress determines how much funding each program will receive.

Back in February, the President introduced his FY07 budget proposal that included a \$5 billion cut in spending for education, social services and employment and training programs. The President's budget is the starting point for the Congressional budget debates. The Specter/Harkin budget amendment [passed by the Senate (73-27)] restored the President's proposed cuts and added back additional funds to bring the available pot of funding for education, social services, and employment and training to FY05 levels.

The Senate's action last week is only the first step in the budget process. Just as with Perkins reauthorization, both chambers must complete their work on the budget, then conference the differences, pass the conference agreement and finally the President must approve the conference agreement.

What does this mean for Perkins? Having the higher Senate budget numbers puts us in a good position for negotiating a higher overall spending level for education, social services and employment and training programs when the House and Senate go to conference on the budget.

Once the budget is completed, appropriators can then start divvying up the funding among programs. What might be confusing is that simultaneous to the current budget debates, the appropriations committees are also meeting even though they do not yet know how much funding they will have to distribute among programs.

For us, there is still more work to do. We need to continue to work on the budget to ensure that the amount of funding available to distribute to programs is at a

minimum, equal to current funding levels. We also need to continue work with the appropriations committees to ensure that Perkins receives, at a minimum, its current level of funding.

We hope this clarification helps. This is a complicated and convoluted process. Please do not hesitate to contact Nichole Jackson at njackson@careertech.org or 202-737-0303 with any questions.

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